

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO AMEMBASSY NASSAU

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 9477

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 673

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, HA, BF

SUBJECT: ASYLUM REQUEST: WILLIAM JOHNS, A18 698 574 DB/JR

REF: (A) STATE 64709; (B) PAUP 506 (NOTAL)

1. WE ARE REPEATING TO YOU PAUP 506 WHICH POINTS OUT THAT WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ABOUT JOHNS' ALLEGED ROLE IN 1968 INVASION ATTEMPT.

2. FYI BASIC FACTS OF THIS INVASION, AT LEAST AS SUMMARIZED BY FILES RETAINED AT POST, SHOW APPARENT DISCREPANCY BETWEEN JOHNS' ACCOUNT OF INVASION AND EMBASSY'S IN THAT INVASION WAS LAUNCHED BY AIR, NOT BY SEA, AND ITS OBJECTIVE WAS NOT CENTER OF CAPE HAITIEN BUT AIRPORT, WHICH WAS CAPTURED AND BRIEFLY HELD.

3. ON MAY 20, 1968 AND UNMARKED AIRCRAFT DROPPED FOUR EXPLOSIVE DEVICES OVER PORT-AU-PRINCE, OF WHICH ONLY ONE EXPLODED. LATER THE SAME DAY AN UNMARKED AIRCRAFT DROPPED EXPLOSIVES OVER CAP HAITIEN, THEN THREE UNMARKED AIRCRAFT LANDED AT CAP HAITIEN AND ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE ARMED INSURGENTS FROM THEM CAPTURED THE AIRPORT AND THE SURROUNDING AREA. IN THE ENSUING FIGHTING, SOME INVADERS WERE REPORTED KILLED, SOME WERE CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN CAPTURED, WHILE OTHERS ESCAPED IN TWO OF THE THREE AIRCRAFT.

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THE THIRD AIRCRAFT, A B-25 OF WWII VINTANGE, WAS CAPTURED BY

GOH FORCES, AND FLOWN TO PORT-AU-PRINCE, WHERE IT REMAINS TODAY (PAUP A-306 OF JUNE 6, 1968). THE GOH SUBSEQUENTLY TRIED AND CONDEMNED TO DEATH TEN PERSONS ALLEGEDLY CAPTURED IN THE FIGHTING, DURING WHOSE TRIAL, HELD JUNE 17 - AUGUST 7, 1968, IT ACCUSED THE USG AND BAHAMIAN GOVERNMENTS OF COMPLICITY (PAUP A-355 OF AUGUST 11, 1968), AS IT ALSO DID BEFORE THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL. THE DEATH SENTENCES WERE COMMUTED TO IMPRISONMENT FOR AN UNSPECIFIED PERIOD. ONE OF THE PRISONERS MANAGED TO ESCAPE AND FIND ASYLUM IN THE CHILIAN EMBASSY (PAUP A-365 OF AUGUST 21, 1968). END FYI.

4. COMMENT. ALTHOUGH OUR FILES MAKE NO REFERENCE TO USE OF BOATS IN INVASION, THE CAP HAITIEN AIRPORT IS NOT FAR FROM THE COAST, AND IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT ESCAPING INVADERS MIGHT HAVE FOUND SMALL SAILBOATS DURING THE NIGHT OF MAY 20, OR JOINED OTHER INSURGENTS WHO POSSIBLY ARRIVED IN BOATS, AND ESCAPED BEFORE THE GOH AUTHORITIES LAUNCHED THEIR COUNTERATTACK THE MORNING OF MAY 21. HOWEVER, THE OPPOSING FORCES EVIDENTLY DID LITTLE ACTUAL FIGHTING AND THE INVADERS' TWO ESCAPING AIRCRAFT DEPARTED PRIOR TO THE COUNTERATTACK. MOREOVER, JOHNS' FAILURE EVEN TO MENTION THE AIRBORNE LANDING AND THE CAPTURE OF THE CAP HAITIEN AIRPORT CASTS DOUBT UPON HIS PARTICIPATION IN THIS PARTICULAR INVASION EFFORT.
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